

Listing of Claims:

1. (Amended). A process for preparing pitch with increased optically anisotropic content, comprising the steps of:

mixing a mixture consisting essentially of from about 10 % to about 70 % by weight of synthetic mesophase pitch and from about 90 % to about 30 % by weight of petroleum-derived isotropic pitch to prepare a pitch mixture; and heat-soaking the resultant pitch mixture at a temperature of from about 350° C to about 450° C for about 2 to about 25 hours to convert isotropic pitch to optically anisotropic mesophase pitch.

2. (Canceled) The process of claim 1, wherein the pitch mixture includes from about 10 % to about 70 % by weight synthetic mesophase pitch and from about 90 % to about 30 % by weight petroleum-derived isotropic pitch.

3. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 2, wherein said step of heat-soaking includes heating the pitch mixture, in an inert atmosphere.

4. (Canceled) A process for preparing pitch moldings, comprising the steps of:

grinding synthetic mesophase pitch to prepare a powdered synthetic mesophase pitch;
grinding partially anisotropic pitch selected from the group consisting of heat-soaked petroleum-derived isotropic pitch and heat-soaked mixture of petroleum-derived isotropic pitch and synthetic mesophase pitch to prepare a powdered partially anisotropic pitch;

stabilizing the powdered synthetic mesophase pitch to obtain an at least partially infusible synthetic mesophase pitch powder;

mixing the at least partially infusible synthetic mesophase pitch powder with the partially anisotropic pitch to prepare a pitch mixture; and

shaping the resultant pitch mixture to prepare a pitch article for subsequent carbonization.

5. (Canceled) The process of claim 4, wherein the powdered synthetic mesophase pitch is less than about 100 μm in at least one dimension.

6. (Canceled) The process of claim 5, wherein said step of stabilizing the powdered synthetic mesophase pitch includes oxidizing the powdered synthetic mesophase pitch at a temperature of from about 230°C to 300°C, during exposure to flowing air.

7. (Canceled) The process of claim 6, wherein the powdered synthetic mesophase pitch realizes a weight gain of at least about 6 % in said step of stabilizing.

8. (Canceled) The process of claim 7, wherein the pitch mixture includes from about 60 % to about 70 % by weight of synthetic mesophase pitch, and from 40 % to about 30 % by weight of partially anisotropic pitch.

9. (Canceled) The process of claim 8, further comprising the step of carbonizing the pitch article.

10. (Canceled) A pitch molding prepared by a process comprising the steps of:

thermally polymerizing a petroleum-derived isotropic pitch by heat-soaking to obtain an at least partially optically anisotropic pitch; and

mixing the at least partially optically anisotropic pitch with an at least partially infusible, synthetic mesophase pitch; and

molding the prepared mixture for subsequent carbonization.

11. (Canceled) A process for preparing pitch fibers comprising the step of:

mixing partially anisotropic pitch with synthetic mesophase pitch, wherein the partially anisotropic pitch is selected from a heat-soaked petroleum-derived isotropic pitch and a heat-soaked mixture of petroleum-derived isotropic pitch and synthetic mesophase pitch;

spinning the mixture into pitch fibers; and

stabilizing the resultant pitch fibers.

12. (Canceled) The process for preparing pitch fibers according to claim 11, wherein the mixture produced in said step of mixing includes from about 80 to about 40 weight % of the partially anisotropic pitch and from 20 to about 60 % of the synthetic mesophase pitch.

13. (Canceled) The process for preparing pitch fibers according to claim 11, wherein said step of stabilizing is carried out at a temperature at from about 270 to about 300 °C.

14. (Canceled) The process for preparing pitch fibers according to claim 11, wherein, during said step of stabilization, the mixture of partially anisotropic pitch and synthetic mesophase pitch realizes a weight gain of at least about 6 %.

15. (Amended) A process for preparing pitch with optically anisotropic content, comprising the steps of:

mixing from about 10% to about 70% of synthetic mesophase pitch and from about 90% to about 30% by weight of petroleum-derived isotropic pitch to prepare a pitch mixture; and heat-soaking the resultant mixture at a temperature of from about 400°C to about 450°C to convert isotropic pitch to optically anisotropic mesophase pitch.

16. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 15, wherein said step of heat-soaking includes heating the pitch mixture in an inert atmosphere.